

## SCRIPTURE READING FOR JANUARY 15, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

### LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Mark is one of the four gospels written to tell the life-story and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It was most likely the first composed between AD 60 and 70, later used by Matthew and Luke. A Chiastic Literary Structure is part of Jewish writing and is designed specifically to point to the important components or the center of the text. Each component has a mirror component. So as seen below, A 1:4-8 and A' 16:1-8 are mirrored, John points to Jesus and the young man points to Jesus at the end of the Gospel text. Following the Chiastic Structure in Mark, the passion prediction becomes the epicenter of the Gospel 8:31-33 is the center and most important part of Mark's telling of Jesus.

Caesarea Philippi :: The context of this story is immensely important. This town was a major Hellenistic city built in the far north of the land near Mount Hermon by Hord Philip in honor of Augustus. It has in ancient times been called *Paneas* in honor of the god Pan who has a famous shrine there. But now (in the time of Jesus) there was a shrine for worshipping the emperor Augustus as god. The town also had previously been a site where the god Baal had been worshipped. Thus, in the midst of a city dedicated to false god, Jesus' true identity is revealed."\*

**Messiah** :: this is the Hebrew version of the word; in Greek (the language in which Mark is written) the word is "**Christ**." This is the first this term/title has been used in the gospel of Mark since the first chapter and verse. "The beginning of the good news of Jesus **Christ**."

the prophets :: the Biblical book of 2 Esdras (which appears in the Catholic Bible) has God saying this will come to pass in 2:18 "17 Do not fear, mother of children, for I have chosen you, says the Lord. 18 I will send you help: my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah."

**REBUKED**:: ἐπιτιμάω | epitimaó meaning to rebuke, chide, admonish. It's also used by Jesus to silence demons who seek to out his identity in Mark 3:12 "11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, "You are the Son of God!" 12 But he sternly ordered them not to make him known. and 5:7 " 7 and [the man] shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? 8 For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" 9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." 10 He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the region. 11 Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding, 12 and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine; let

### Mark 8:27-38

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the **Messiah**." 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He said all *this quite openly*. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he **REBUKED** Peter and said, "**GET BEHIND ME, Satan!** For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

34 He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and **take up their cross** and **FOLLOW ME**." 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- How does Peter see clearly and also not see at all?
- What do you think Jesus means when he says that anyone who follows him must take up their cross?
- According to scholars this is the very center of Mark's gospel – the main point that he's making. Why is it so important? How do you hear it as important to you – to us – today?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

## LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

...let us enter them." The choice of this word seems to show that Peter has no better understanding than the demons who gave a better answer.\*

*Passion predictions*:: Jesus tells what will happen to the Messiah – to him – three times in the gospel of Mark. The first is here in 8:31. The second is in 9:31: "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." And finally in 10:33-34: "Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the gentiles;<sup>34</sup> they will mock him and spit upon him and flog him and kill him, and after three days he will rise again."

*GET BEHIND ME | FOLLOW ME* :: while translated differently in English, in the original Greek of the text these two expressions are exactly the same words. It's the context that make one negative and one positive. Rather than following Jesus, Peter gets in the way, becoming an obstacle (out of pride?; ignorance?; foolishness?). While Peter is not possessed, he is influenced by the forces of darkness to think in a merely human manner about the future of Jesus. So, Peter unwittingly serves as Satan's tool here, ironically at the precise moment when he also has gained a partial insight into Jesus' identity. Peter is like the blind man healed in Mark 8:34. "<sup>23</sup> He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" <sup>24</sup> And the man looked up and said, "*I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.*" <sup>25</sup> Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he looked intently, and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly." Peter sees, but not clearly, as if through a glass darkly, and so Peter is easily misled.\*

**take up their cross** :: Plutarch c. AD 46 – after AD 119) was a famous Greek Middle philosopher, historian, biographer, essayist, and priest at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi. Plutarch wrote "Every criminal who is executed carries his own cross." It suggests that take up your cross means be prepared to be ridiculed, spit on, be seen and treated as a criminal, be thought to be guilty of shameful things. Jesus is inviting his followers to take a walk on the wild side, for only criminals and revolutionaries and slavers were crucified. Crucifixion was justly called the extreme penalty and was reserved for the more hardened criminals and those committing treason against the state\*.